

# **From Jamaica to Cuba: the languages of revolutions and revolts**

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# Jamaica and the forgotten history of the Maroon autonomy

- The early Maroon communities of Jamaica were never defeated. Today, there are maroon communities that are autonomous (Accompong Town in the West, Moore town in the East...)
- They managed to survive and develop in the northern part of the island.
- The Maroon resistance inspired the Rastafari movement and identity in Jamaica.
- "Maroon proto-States" (Martin, 2016: 127). Marronage (Haiti, Suriname, Jamaica, St. Vincents...) could not break colonial powers (except Haiti) but could affect balance of powers in these slavocentric societies.
- Resistance against plantation society (Martin, 2016: 140). Suriname (against the English occupation, 1651-1667 and then against the Dutch occupation).

## **West Indies Federation (1958-1962) for islands that were former colonies of the United Kingdom**

"In the late 1950s, we had witnessed a time of epic transformation, the beginning of the end of colonialism, a failed West Indian federation in 1958, ending the decade with the Cuban Revolution of 1959" (Boyce, 2013 : 34)

**# Task 1 Comment this statement in terms of power relations**

## Brief history of Jamaica

- Early settlers, the Arawaks
- 1494 Columbus arrived in Jamaica which was annexed by Spain
- 1665 Island ceased to England (Treaty of Madrid)
- 1834 abolition of slavery. Some attempts to transform slaves into "apprentices". In 1838, the slaves obtained freedom
- 1962 Independence





# Jamaican culture and languages

- English / African-English creoles with the presence of vernacular languages
- Importance of religion
- Mento (at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Importance of rhythm
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiHUdvIE9pc>
- Marcus Garvey and the affirmation of Black or African nationalism.
- The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League

## # Task 2 – The specificity of the Rastafari movement

- In which way can the Rastafari movement be perceived as a resistance against colonialism?

# The Rastafari movement

- Active in Jamaica in the 1930s (Martin, 2016: 300)
- Importance of the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie
- Marcus Garvey has a special place in the revival of the African roots of this movement. (Influence on reggae with a specific view on Pan-African movements)
- The alternative society *Pinnacle* (1940-1957) with a specific focus on autonomy (Leonard Howell)
- Michael Manley (1924-1997), who was Prime Minister during years 1972-1980 and 1989-1992, used this movement to implement his socialist programme. Close relation to Cuba during his mandates.

## Cuba and the clash of big powers

- An history of resistance againts invaders and big powers. The contribution of Cuba to the history of Caribbean is fundamental
- Hatuey (Tainos) was present in Hispaniola and then came to Cuba. He died in 1512 but resisted against Spaniards. Bartolomé de las Casas described his death.
- He united Africans and Indigenous people to fight against Europeans.





# Cuba Independence wars

- 1868-1878 against Spain. Consequence: forbidden possession of weapons
- 1886 Abolition of slavery in Cuba. Difficulties for the ex-slaves to reach decent conditions of life
- A lot of propaganda in the United States for annexation of Cuba.
- 1898 Explosion of the battleship USS Maine (258 crew members killed). The US sends troops against Spanish colonial authorities
- 1901 Relative independence of Cuba that won it progressively
- Second Occupation of Cuba by the US (1906-1909) decided by President Roosevelt

# The Independent Party of Color

- Afro-Cuban issue
- 1908 – Establishment of the Independent Party of Color by Evariste Estenoz (Martin, 2016: 279).
- Criminalization of Afro-Cuban movements
- *Santería* (cult linked to African diasporic religion). Syncretic religion between Yoruba traditions and Catholicism.
- Afro-Cuban populations discriminated and excluded from power. Estenoz was jailed in 1910 (Martin, 2016: 280).



## José Martí (1853-1895)

- Construction of a national hero
- Martí's father (Spain). 1869, he founded his own newspaper, *La Patria libre* and is arrested by colonial authorities.
- Arrestations, deportations to Spain. Ambassador of Cuban Independence in the United States, in Latin America and even in the Caribbean. Novels, poetry, political writings.
- He is killed while fighting Spanish troops in 1895
- 25 March 1895 : Manifesto of Montecristi where Martí established the principles of the independence of Cuba.

## Letter to Manuel Mercado (May 18, 1895)

- "Everyday now I am in danger of giving my life for my country and duty—since I understand it and have the spirit to carry it out—in order to prevent, by the timely independence of Cuba, the United States from extending its hold across the Antilles and falling with all the greater force on the lands of our America. All I have done up to now and all I will do is for this purpose... I lived in the monster, and I know its entrails—and my sling is the sling of David" (Martí, 200: 53)
- **#Task 3 What does José Martí see as his duty?**

## The Platt Amendment (Extracts)

- In June 1901, the Cuban constitutional convention incorporated the **Platt Amendment**. The Congress of the United States of America, by an Act approved March 2, 1901, provided as follows:  
*I. That the government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power or powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign power or powers to obtain by colonization or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgement in or control over any portion of said island."*

## The Platt Amendment

- *"III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba."*

## The Platt Amendment

- *"VII. That to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon with the President of the United States."*

## #Task 4 Decoding the Platt Amendment

- Imagine you are a citizen of Cuba in 1901. How would you react to such an amendment?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platt\\_Amendment#Provisions\\_of\\_the\\_amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platt_Amendment#Provisions_of_the_amendment)

## From Batista to Castro, jumping into the Cold War

- Fulgencio Batista came to power with a coup in 1933, he was in duty until 1958 except between 1944 and 1952 as he was living in the US
- Batista's background (poor rural family), a *mulatto*. (Castro's father was from Galicia and was an entrepreneur). Batista's father was a sugar worker, Batista was a migrant worker before he joined the army (Castro had a wealthy background and had access to education).

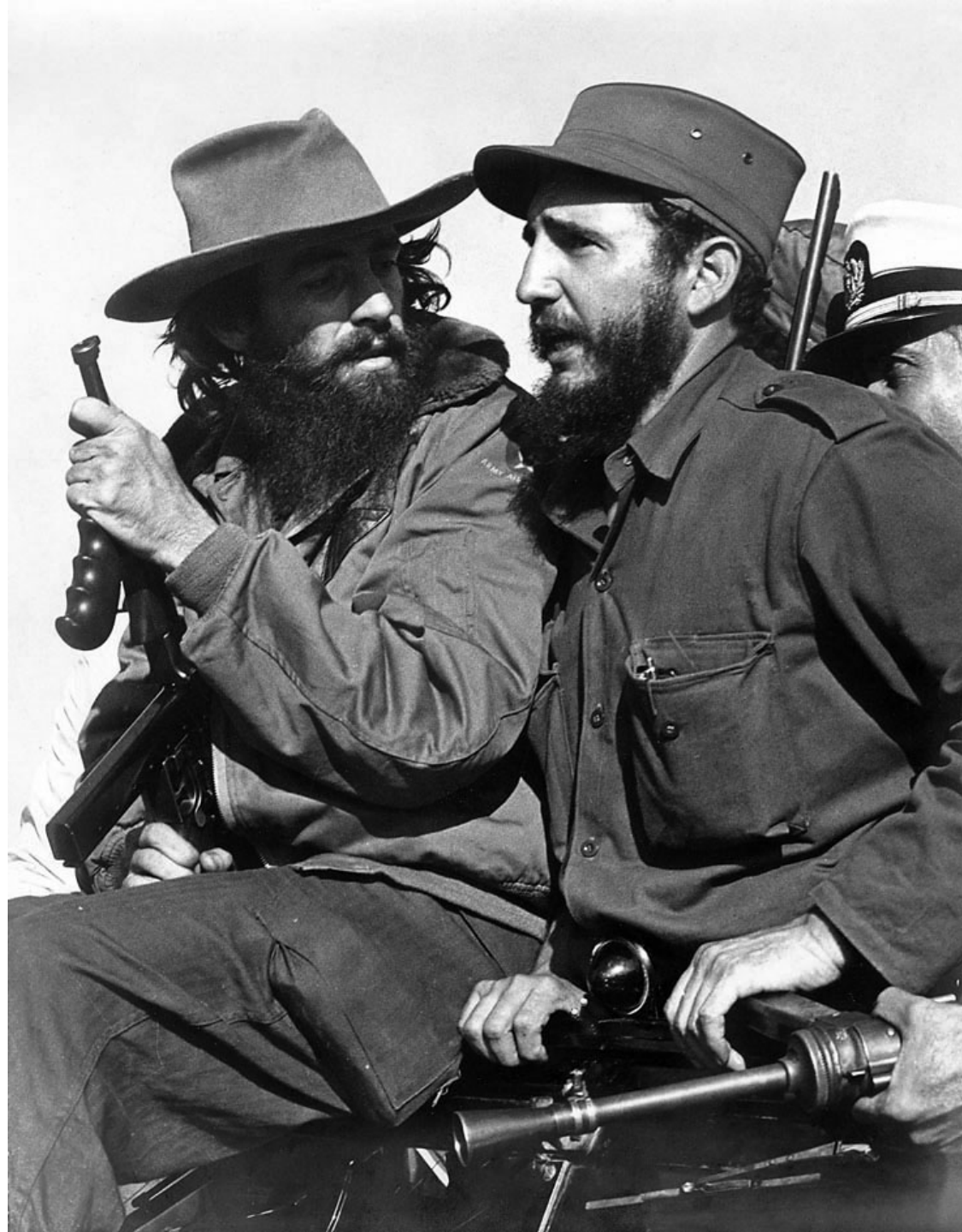
# The increasing power of the army

- Batista had the real power even if there were a succession of Presidents
- 1933, agricultural reforms but Batista was close to the American interests. Choice of the United States, this geopolitical position influenced economic reforms. President Grau San Martin granted democratic, social and economic reforms but he was removed in 1934. Batista was elected President in 1940 until 1944, he made a State coup and Cuba jumped into dictatorship between 1952 and 1958.
- Fidel Castro, brilliant lawyer leading student upheavals. Was married to the daughter of a Minister of Batista



# The Cuban Revolution

- Movement of 26 July 1953 (Attack against Moncada Barracks)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSGb1KzQapg>
- # Task 5 How are Castro and the rebels portrayed in these news?



# The Cuban Revolution

- #Task 6 Analyze the reasons explaining the success of the Cuban Revolution. Why could Fidel Castro stay in power during 50 years?

# The success of the Cuban Revolution

- Fidel Castro studied at the Law School of Havana University. Many contacts and student movements
- He initiated guerillas quite early (1947 against the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo)
- He was sentenced to jail after the Moncada barack attacks (26 July 1953) and he was released by Batista in 1954 (he began to organize the revolutionary movement with his brother)
- Use of propaganda (Radio) is decisive in the reception of the Revolution

# The success of the Cuban Revolution

- Symbolic aspect of the Revolution (reminiscences of José Martí) with a will of emancipation (against colonialism and imperialism)
- Castro is a charismatic and strategical leader in anticipating threats, using propaganda and having an international visibility
- After 1959, the choice of Soviet Union during the Cold war influenced the authoritarian regime.
- Crisis of 1962 with the missiles (but the big powers negotiated without including Cuba government). Embargo from the US

## The success of the Cuban Revolution

- Castro transformed the history of Cuba and took the lead with the resistance against the US
- The Cuban government prevented different attacks and had strategical moves against the Cubans in exile in the US
- Internationalization of revolutionary wars (Angola...) and diplomacy (Cuba and the Non-Aligned Movement, denunciation of imperialistic wars, early condemnation of the Apartheid in South Africa)

## Conclusion

- Some islands affirmed a form of autonomy and reaction against the geopolitical tendencies like Jamaica and Cuba
- These countries could also promote cultural specificities and a lifestyle
- At the same time, these nations became prevailing in the Caribbean zone.

## Conclusion:

- "This Caribbean-nation paradigm, it seems, is what continues to elude all Caribbean politicians, as we operate still with at least three or four languages without programs of multiple language studies and still with some quasi-independent nations, semicolonies, as Kamau Brathwaite would describe them. In a sense, then, a writer like Aimé Césaire from Martinique, in his speech later published as Discourse on Colonialism (1955), has particular resonance in his condemnation of colonialism, but it reveals him as also caught in a contradiction marked by the inability to imagine a Caribbean nation" (Boyce, 2013: 41)
- #Task 7 Does the idea of a Caribbean nation have a sense? Discuss the statement above



## References

- Boyce, Carole Davies. 2013. *Caribbean Spaces : Escapes from Twilight Zones*. University of Illinois Press.
- Martí, José 2007. *José Martí reader: writings on the Americas*. (2. ed.) Melbourne: Ocean Press.
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